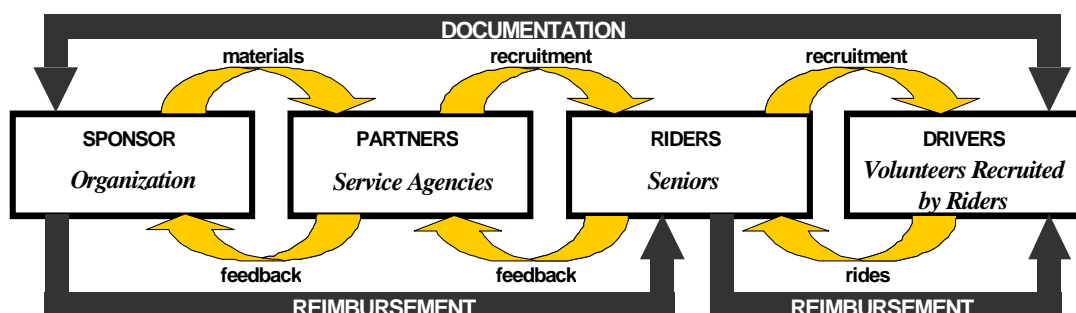


## A VOLUNTEER FRIENDS MODEL

The *Volunteer Friends* model was designed by the Beverly Foundation of Pasadena, California as a low cost, consumer driven, senior friendly approach for providing transportation to seniors. The model is an outgrowth of five assumptions. (1) Many seniors need rides. (2) If seniors who need rides have something to offer friends and neighbors in return, they will feel more comfortable asking for rides. (3) If they can be reimbursed for their travel, friends and neighbors will be more likely to provide rides. (4) If friends and neighbors can use their own automobiles it will eliminate the need to purchase vehicles. (5) If the riders and drivers can work out the schedule for rides, it will eliminate the need for staffing and infrastructure.

**Primary Features.** The primary features of the *Volunteer Friends* model include a sponsor, partners, riders, volunteer drivers, documentation and reimbursement. The interaction among these features is illustrated below.



**Key Elements.** The model includes the following elements:

Leadership: an organization that can act as sponsor

Riders: seniors who are referred by aging-related service organizations

Drivers: volunteers recruited by riders (may be friends, neighbors, and community volunteers)

Escorts: drivers who can serve as escorts and provide physical and emotional support

Vehicles: private automobiles owned by volunteer drivers

Rides: to essential services as well as quality of life destinations

Availability: every day (including weekends), day and night

Reservations: rider makes plans directly with volunteer drivers

Service: door-through-door (or door-to-door if preferred)

Fees: no rider fees

Reimbursement: based on travel patterns of rider and given to the rider to give to the driver

Budget: \$25,000 (not including development costs)

Driver Screening: copies of driver license, auto registration, auto liability insurance; and driver self-reports of previous collisions and violations

Marketing: partnerships with referring service providers and wide distribution of materials

**Innovations.** In addition to drawing on the best features of existing Supplemental Transportation Programs for seniors (STPs), the design of the *Volunteer Friends* model was guided by what the Beverly Foundation has labeled the “5 A’s of Senior Friendly Transportation.” The 5 A’s are criteria that seniors and caregivers have identified as critical to efficient and effective transportation for older adults, and are incorporated into the model as follows:

**Availability:** The *Volunteer Friends* transportation service can be used by seniors who have difficulty using traditional forms of public and paratransit.

**Accessibility:** Wait times are minimized or totally avoided, and door-through-door and escort service are provided.

**Adaptability:** Rides are available for any purpose, any time and anywhere that the rider can arrange with their driver.

**Acceptability:** Rides are provided in the comfort and convenience of a private vehicle, and are not provided by a stranger but by the choice of the rider.

**Affordability:** Rides are free and drivers are reimbursed for their travel.

**Efficiencies.** The *Volunteer Friends* model avoids major capital expenses by utilizing vehicles used by the drivers. Personnel and operating costs are minimized by involving volunteer drivers, by relying on service organizations to refer riders and publicize the effort, and by requiring riders to recruit their own drivers and schedule their own trips.

**A Pilot Project.** In February of 2002, an 18-month *Volunteer Friends* pilot project called PasRide was initiated by the Beverly Foundation. The project had two objectives: (1) to test the viability of the service model that would provide rides to seniors and complement existing transportation services; and (2) to create an adaptable process model that could be adapted by communities throughout the country.

The Beverly Foundation, as the sponsor, planned and implemented the pilot with the assistance of professionals in transportation, aging, service delivery, risk management and insurance, and with seniors themselves. Project mentors who operated volunteer-oriented STPs contributed technical and informational assistance. The Foundation, as the sponsor, did not hire additional staff or purchase equipment or vehicles in conjunction with the pilot. In August of 2003, the pilot was completed and successfully relocated to a permanent administrative setting.

The pilot demonstrated a low cost/low maintenance approach for easy adaptation by other communities as a stand-alone program or as part of a menu of services. During the pilot, a complete information packet, called the Volunteer Friends Starter Kit, was developed to assist groups and organizations in its adaptation. A complete start-to-finish TurnKey planning and implementation kit will be available in late 2004.

**Recognition.** Several valuable elements of the *Volunteer Friends* approach originated in a transportation initiative in Riverside, California called T.R.I.P. The PasRide pilot was undertaken as part of a larger STPs Mobilizer Project in partnership with the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. The overall mobilizer project included national STPs development and expansion through indexing, resource materials development, and demonstration activities.

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## Volunteer Friends Adaptation

On January 29, 2004 Congressman Howard L. Berman (D-California – 28<sup>th</sup> District) announced that Congress has approved his request to allocate \$50,000 for a pilot *Volunteer Friends* Senior Transportation Program in Southern California's San Fernando Valley.

### Volunteer Friends Model

The primary features of the *Volunteer Friends* model include a sponsor, partners, riders, volunteer drivers, documentation and reimbursement.

The **key elements** include:

Leadership: an organization that can act as sponsor

Riders: referral by aging-related service organizations

Drivers: volunteers recruited by riders

Escorts: drivers who can provide extra support

Vehicles: automobiles owned by volunteer drivers

Rides: to essential & quality of life activities

Availability: agreement between rider and driver

Reservations: rider makes plans with volunteer drivers

Service: door- to (and through)-door

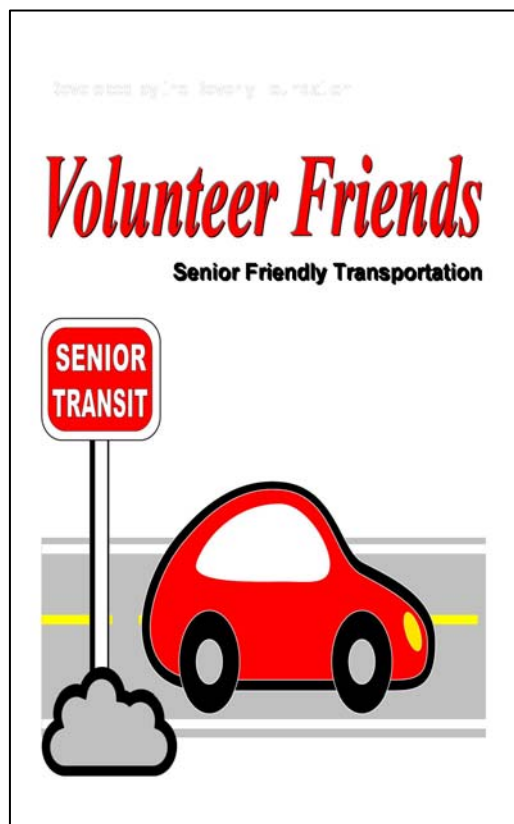
Fees: no rider fees

Reimbursement: given to the rider to give to the driver

Budget: \$32,000 (not including planning costs)

Driver Screening: copies of driver license, auto registration, auto liability insurance

Marketing: partnerships with referring service providers and wide distribution of materials

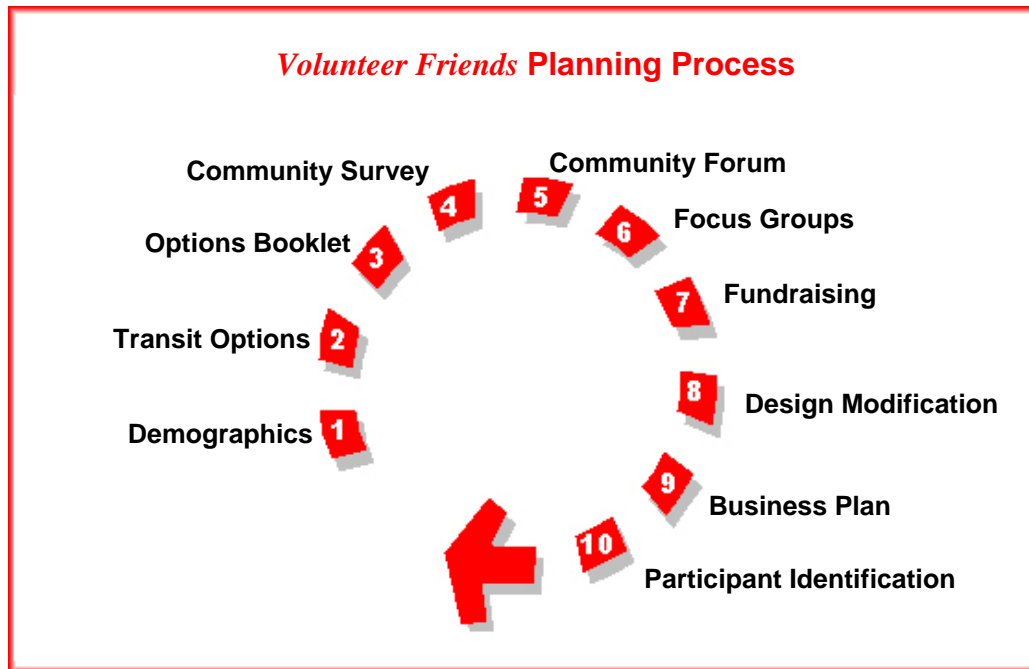


### The Volunteer Friends Adaptation

The Congressional allocation will establish a pilot project to assist North Hollywood seniors who are no longer able to drive. In its capacity as project advisor, the Beverly Foundation provides technical assistance in planning and monitoring the adaptation of the pilot. In order to ensure coordination, planning activities are linked closely with the East Valley Senior Center (the pilot sponsor), Congressman Berman's office, aging and transportation policy makers, planners and service providers in the City and County of Los Angeles.

## A 10-STEP Planning Process

The illustration below summarizes the pilot's 6-month planning that began in April of 2004.



### Planning Activities

The **Steps 1 & 2** include the collection of additional demographic data on the target population and information about transportation options in the community that are available to seniors. **Step 3** is the preparation of a transportation options booklet for use by senior service providers and seniors themselves. **Step 4** involves a survey of seniors in the Van Nuys area to identify transportation concerns of seniors. These concerns can be included in the **Step 5** activity of holding community forums. **Step 6** organizes a series of focus groups (with a companion survey) for gathering opinions of seniors and volunteer drivers about the transportation options in general and the *Volunteer Friends* model in specific. The opinions are used for **Step 7**, modifying the *Volunteer Friends* design. **Step 8** develops a fundraising plan and **Step 9** develops a business plan. **Step 10** includes the initial start up activity of identifying, recruiting and training of riders for the pilot.

### Next Steps

The 12-month implementation phase is expected to begin in early 2006. It emphasizes design and implementation as a means of getting *Volunteer Friends* program up and running quickly so that seniors will be able to get transportation services on a timely basis. During the demonstration, The Beverly Foundation Volunteer Driver TurnKey Kit that includes technical materials related to the planning, implementation and evaluation process and related tools and forms will be tapped as a resource and as a means of encouraging adaptation of the *Volunteer Friends* model in other communities.

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